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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PANAMA 02150

E.O. 12356: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PM

SUBJECT: PANAMA'S PROTEST OVER ALLEGED STATEMENTS BY
 - CONGRESSMAN LOWRY

REF: PANAMA 1898

1. I TOLD FONMIN ABADIA FEBRUARY 14 THAT HIS FEBRUARY 7 PROTEST NOTE (REFTEL) MADE AS MUCH SENSE AS STATE'S COMPLAINING TO PANAMANIAN AMBASSADOR BAZAN ABOUT STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED AT TIMES TO OPPOSITION LEGISLATOR WILLI COCHEZ. I SAID I WAS SURE CONGRESSMAN LOWRY COULD BE EXPECTED TO GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO PANAMA'S CRITIQUE OF PL. 96-70, BUT I SAW NOTHING TO BE GAINED BY PANAMA'S FORMALLY PROTESTING REMARKS ALLEGEDLY MADE BY THE INFLUENTIAL CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE PANAMA CANAL, IN ANTICIPATION OF SUCH A REVIEW.
 2. BESIDES, I SAID, WE WERE UNABLE TO ASCERTAIN THAT CONGRESSMAN LOWRY HAD IN FACT MADE THE ALLEGED STATEMENTS ABADIA HAD FOUND SO OBJECTIONABLE.
 3. ABADIA FIRST MUMBLED IN SEMI-APOLOGY THAT THE PROTEST NOTE WAS "ONE OF THOSE THINGS WE HAVE TO DO," AND THEN (AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT) SUGGESTED IF LOWRY HAD BEEN MIS-QUOTED, THAT WE SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT IN OUR REPLY. I SUGGESTED IT MIGHT BE BETTER SIMPLY TO LET OUR LEGISLATORS PROCEED WITH THEIR STUDY OF PL. 96-70. HE DID NOT REPLY.
 4. COMMENT: ABADIA'S REACTION FORTIFIES OUR BELIEF THAT HIS PROTEST NOTE MERITS NO FURTHER CONSIDERATION (OR REPLY) ON OUR PART. THE WAY THIS WAS HANDLED ALSO ARGUES FOR A NON-RESPONSE: WE FIRST LEARNED OF THE PROTEST NOTE VIA THE EVENING TV NEWS, ON FEBRUARY 7, I.E., BEFORE THE NOTE WAS SEEN AT THE EMBASSY.
- BRIGGS
 END OF MESSAGE

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